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Reagan declares 'leaks' have reached 'new high'

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Washington — President Reagan, refusing to give specific examples, declared yesterday that unauthorized "leaks" of classified information had reached a "new high" in his administration and had "endangered things that we were trying to accomplish."

The leaks had to stop, the president said in fuller explanation of his new information crackdown, and he left open the possibility of using lie detectors in an effort to catch officials who make unauthorized disclosures.

Mr. Reagan refused at his press conference to specify the leaks that, he said, had been "destructive to the foreign policy we were trying to conduct... [and] endangered delicate negotiations that were going on."

"If I try to give you specifics on that," he said, "then I'm leaking."

The administration is known to have been angered recently by news stories concerning the defense budget, airplane sales to Taiwan, civil de-

fense studies and plans for "enterprise zones" for urban development—all published before the administration was ready to make its own disclosures.

Mr. Reagan asserted that his administration "is implementing the law" in its effort to stop news leaks. "It is against the law for anyone to release this [classified] information."

The president did not cite a law, but White House and Defense Department officials said the espionage law was the applicable statute and that "leakers" of classified information could be prosecuted under it.

The section they cited provides for prosecuting anyone who gives an unauthorized person national defense information that the possessor "has reason to believe could be used to the injury of the United States or to the advantage of any foreign nation."

Defense Department lawyers, according to a spokesman, contended that they had to show only that the information was classified because its release would be harmful, and not that the leaker intended harm in disclosing it.

In fact, many leaks come from persons of substantial importance in one department who oppose some development, or want to head off one, in another department that they think will be harmful. Members of Congress similarly have been known to use leaks to try to counteract some executive branch-enterprise they oppose.

Through the president's press conference and in other moves, the Reagan administration is showing concern about:

- Protection of genuine national security secrets.
- Prevention of what are considered premature disclosures about internal deliberations, whether or not classified information is involved.

- Coordination of television and other appearances by top officials to avoid contradictory statements and give an image of unity at the top.

Leaks have "reached a new high," Mr. Reagan said.

Asked whether he endorsed the use of lie detectors to find information leakers, Mr. Reagan indicated that specific cases might determine that. He said he was awaiting a plan from